

Message Text

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/CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 1376

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT CH

SUBJ: THE MOOD IN PEKING

REF: HONG KONG 7735

1. SUMMARY. A NUMBER OF CURIOUS EVENTS AND NONEVENTS HAVE EVOKED A MOOD OF UNCERTAINTY IN PEKING AND GENERATED CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION IN THE FOREIGN COMMUNITY. THESE INCLUDE: NONOBSERVANCE OF THE ANNIVERSARY OF CHU TEH'S PASSING COUPLED WITH FRONT-PAGE ATTENTION TO THE ANNIVERSARY OF FUCHOW MR COMMANDER PI TING-CHUN'S DEATH; FAILURE TO PUBLISH A PARTY DAY EDITORIAL OR MARK THE EVENT IN ANY WAY IN PEKING; PUBLICATION OF A LONG AND AUTHORITATIVE ARTICLE BY THE PSEUDONYMOUS HSIANG CHUN; AND THE LACK OF ANY HIGH LEVEL VISITORS IN PEKING OR SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE BEFORE LATE AUGUST. WE SEE ALL THIS ADDING UP TO A LEADERSHIP WHICH IS CONFUSED, SQUABBLING, OR PREOCCUPIED WITH OTHER MATTERS - PERHAPS THE LONG-AWAITED NATIONAL LEVEL MEETINGS. END SUMMARY.

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2. CHU TEH AND PI TING-CHUN. ALTHOUGH PEKING RADIO AND SEVERAL JOURNALS HAVE RUN COMMEMORATIVE PIECES MARKING THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY (JULY 6) OF CHU TEH'S PASSING, PEKING'S OFFICIAL PRESS WAS ABSOLUTELY SILENT -- A RATHER PECULIAR OMISSION GIVEN THE POST-GANG OF FOUR TENDENCY TO DEPICT CHU AS PART OF A REVOLUTIONARY TRINITY TOGETHER WITH MAO AND CHOU. COMPOUNDING

THE PECULIARITY IS THE FRONT PAGE ATTENTION GIVEN BY THE JULY 8 PEOPLE'S DAILY (AND PAGE TWO TREATMENT IN TH KWANGMING DAILY) TO THE TRANSPORTATION BY SPECIAL AIRCRAFT FROM FUCHOW TO PEKING OF THE ASHES OF FORMER FUCHOW MILITARY REGIONAL COMMANDER PI TING-CHUN, WHO DIED A YEAR AGO (JULY 7) UNDER UNEXPLAINED CIRCUMSTANCES. WHILE CHU'S DEATH ANNIVERSARY WENT UNNOITCED. TOP PARTY, STATE, AND MILITARY LEADERS HEADED BY CHEN HIS-LIEN AND YU CHIU-LI PAID THEIR RESPECTS TO PI'S ASHES ON ARRIVAL AT PEKING AIRPORT.

3. PARTY DAY AND HSIANG CHUN'S ARTICLE. PARTY DAY (JULY 1) PASSED IN PEKING WITHOUT AN EDITORIAL, BANNER HEADLINES, PHOTOGRAPHS OF MAO AND/OR HUA, A LEADERSHIP TURNOUT, OR SPECIAL DECORATIONS. AS HONG KONG OBSERVED (REFTEL), PROVINCIAL CELEBRATIONS OF THE EVENT WERE FEW AND MUTED, PRESUMABLY REFLECTING LACK OF GUIDANCE FROM THE CENTER. BUT WHILE THE LEADERSHIP CHOSE NOT TO PUBLISH -- OR WAS UNABLE TO PUBLISH -- A PARTY DAY EDITORIAL, THE JULY 7 PEOPLE'S DAILY CARRIED A LONG, AUTHORITATIVE OPUS BY HSIANG CHUN, A PSEUDONYM ("TO THE MASSES") PROBABLY REFLECTING THE VIEWS OF THE POLITBURO OR AT LEAST SOME POLITBURO MEMBERS (REPORTING BY SEPTTEL). IT IS WORTH RECALLING THAT THE ONLY PREVIOUS EFFORT BY HSIANG CHUN WAS PRINTED ON MARCH 14 -- DURING THE CENTRAL WORK CONFERENCE CALLED TO DISCUSS, INTER ALIA, THE TENG HSIAO-PING QUESTION.

4. OTHER INDICATORS. DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES HAVE NOTED AN
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APPARENT TIGHTENING OF SECURITY IN PEKING; THE PLA SEEMS SLIGHTLY MORE IN EVIDENCE DURING DAYLIGHT HOURS. FOR THE PAST WEEK IT HAS REQUIRED AT LEAST DOUBLE THE NORMAL AMOUNT OF TIME TO CALL A TAXI -- A POSSIBLE EXPLANATION BEING THAT BEHICLES HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED TO TRANSPORT DELEGATES TO A MEETING. AND NO HIGH LEVEL VISITORS HAVE ARRIVED IN PEKING OR ARE SCHEDULED PRIOR TO THE END OF AUGUST (WHEN SECRETARY VANCE, UN SECRETARY-GENERAL WALDHEIM, AND POSSIBLY PRESIDENT TITO WILL ARRIVE IN RAPID SUCCESSION).

5. COMMENT: THERE MAY WELL BE SIMPLE EXPLANATIONS FOR THESE ANOMALIES. BUT TAKEN TOGETHER THEY ADD UP, IN OUR VIEW TO A LEADERSHIP WHICH IS CONFUSED, POSSIBLY SQUABBLING, AND PREOCCUPIED WITH OTHER MATTERS. IF THERE IS A MAJOR MEETING ALREADY IN SESSION, IT WOULD LIKELY BE AN EXPANDED POLITBURO CONCLAVE OR SOME SORT OF PREPARATORY MEETING RATHER THAN A FULL-FLEDGED CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM (SINCE FUKIEN FIRST SECRETARY LIAO CHIH-KAO AND KIANGSI FIRST SECRETARY CHIANG WEI-CHING, BOTH CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS JUST ARRIVED ON THE AIRCRAFT BEARING PI'S ASHES.)
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